

FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB OF BALLARAT

EXCURSION / NEWS SHEET

DECEMBER 1980

Meeting. 5th December: "Birds and Photography" - Mr. P. & V. Klapste.

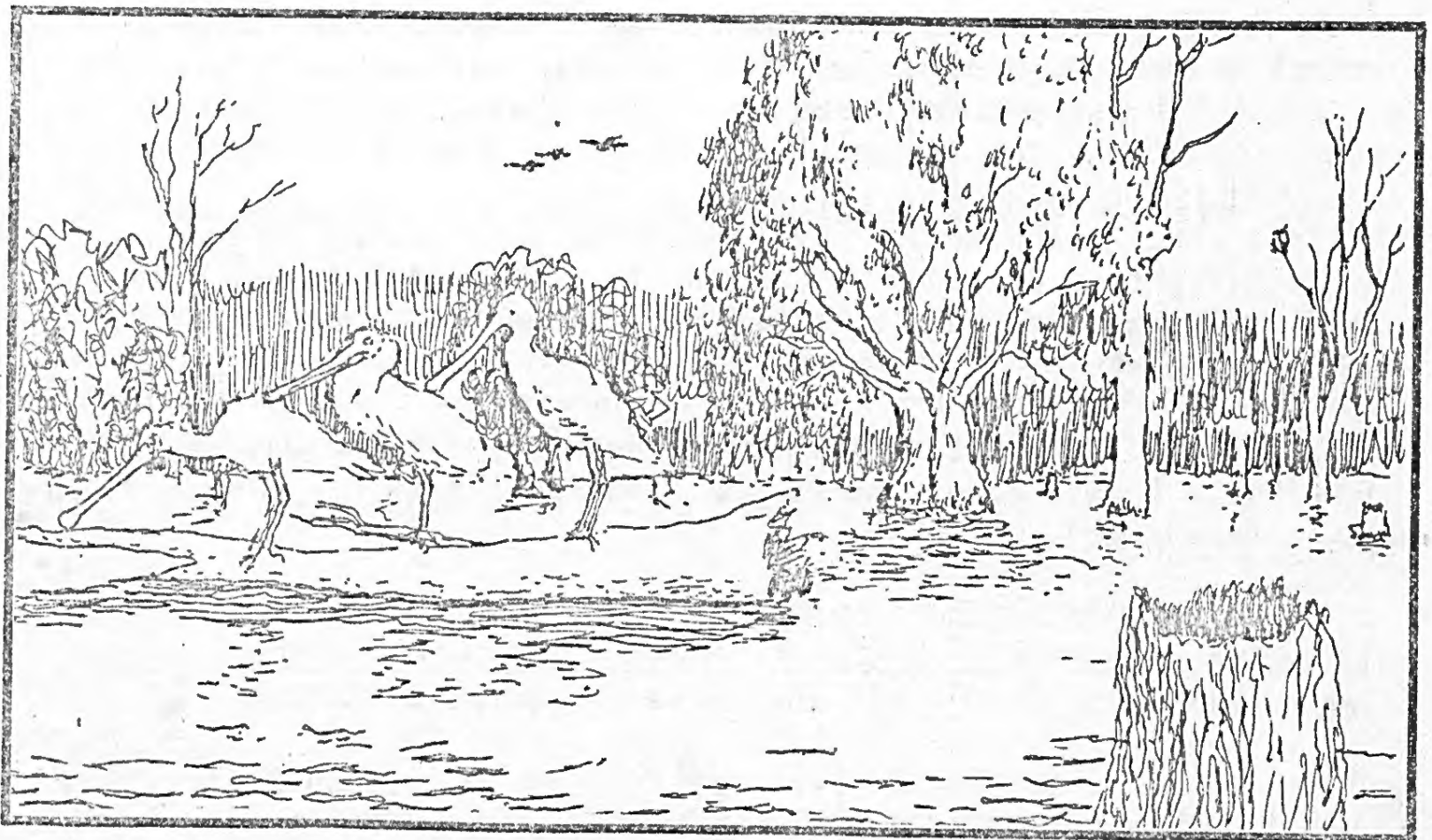
Meeting. 6th February: "First Aid in the Bush" - Mr. R. Borch.

Excursion SUNDAY 7th December - Half Day - Lerderderg River.

Optional - stay for B.B.Q. tea. Leader Dr. F. Harrap.

Excursion SUNDAY 8th February - Full Day - Ocean Grove Nature Reserve.

Leader Mr. J. Wheeler.



Excursion to Merrin Merrin

President: Mr. R. BORCH Phone 42 8630;

Vice-President: Dr. F. HARRAP Phone 30 1651

Secretary: Miss H. BURGESS Phone 31 2210;

Treasurer: Mr. S. REYNOLDS. Phone 32 7721

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Meetings, as specified, are held in the Administration Building of the School of Mines and Industries, Lydiard Street South, Ballarat, commencing 8 pm.

EXCURSIONS, AS SPECIFIED, COMMENCE FROM CROCKERS, Cnr. STURT and ARMSTRONG STREETS, BALLARAT, AT 9.30 am FOR FULL DAY OUTINGS.

OR AT 1.30 pm FOR HALF DAY.

NEW MEMBERS

We welcome Mr. B. Gould, Mr. and Mrs. H. Trezise, Mr. N. Nash, Mrs. O. McNiece, Master P. Pickford, and wish them a most happy and rewarding time with the Club.

NOMINATIONS for OFFICE BEARERS must be handed in no later than the meeting on 6th February, 1981. The Annual Meeting is on March 6th. The committee consists of 10 members including President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer.

BOC TOUR TO IRON RANGE AUGUST - 1981

The BOC is organising two camps in the Iron Range during August 1981, the first to be preceded by an optional coach safari from Cairns visiting Mission Beach, Townsville Common, Seaview Range, Chartres Towers, Mareeba and a launch trip to Michaelmas Cay. This coach tour commences at Cairns on Saturday 18th July returning Saturday 1st August.

The first group going to the Iron Range for a base camp on the Claudie River from Saturday 1st August to Sunday 16th August will be made up of members who go on the Cairns/Townsville and Hinterland Tour.

Group two will leave Cairns Airport on Saturday 15th August at 1 p.m. for a 2 week base camp in the Iron Range returning Sunday 30th August (Melbourne).

Costs : Cairns-Hinterland coach safari tour \$330.00.

Iron Range Camp - all inclusive ex-Cairns \$550.00.

Send 4 S.A.E. 's to Mrs. L. Feather, P.O. Box 360., South Yarra 3141. Tel. No. 241 3118.

Plus deposit of \$50.00 per segment (cheques payable to B.O.C.) for camp and or coach tour.

VISIT TO THE SCHOOL OF FORESTRY, CRESWICK

FRIDAY, 7th NOVEMBER, 1980.

Under the direction of Mr. John McDonald, a lecturer at the School of Forestry, the members of our club were set no mean task to identify twenty-four specimens of eucalyptus and acacia.

We were introduced to the basic aspects for identification by referring to the keys set out in L.F. Costermans : "Trees of Victoria - an illustrated field guide. (Renwick, Pride.), and F.J.C. Rogers : "A Field Guide to Victorian Wattles". (Brown, Prin, Anderson.)

For all eucalyptus species the main divisions are gum, peppermint, box and iron bark, with mallee and mahogany gum being in a miscellaneous group. The meaning of eucalyptus, as with all botanic names using greek or latin roots, relates to characteristics of the plant : in this instance the bud is well covered. Compare this with the angophora (vessel bearing) which has no cap on its seed vessel. Another means of identifying these species is by observing whether the mature leaves are opposite each other (angophora) or alternate (eucalyptus).

In broad outline, the acacias are distinguished by the type of leaf or phyllode.

It was obvious from members' participation and comments that this activity was appreciated. It gave us all an opportunity to learn from our mistakes as well as attend to the process of identifying plants in an orderly and scientific manner.

Mr. Greg Binns thanked Mr. McDonald.

M. Tonkin.

Examples of Eucalypts and Acacias at School of Forestry, Creswick on 7.11.80.

Eucalypts

Manna Gum (*E. viminalis*), River Red Gum (*E. camaldulensis*), Victorian Blue Gum (Eurabbie) (*E. bicostata*), Sugar Gum (*E. cladocalyx*), Swamp Gum (*E. ovata*), Yellow Gum (White Ironbark) (*E. leucoxylon*), Snow Gum (White Sallee) (*E. pauciflora*), Mountain Grey Gum (*E. cypellocarpa*), Long Leafed Box (*E. gonicalyx*), Grey Box (*E. microcarpa*), Narrow Leafed Peppermint (*E. radiata*), Red Stringy Bark (*E. maciorhyncha*), Alpine Ash (Woollybutt)

(*E. delegatensis*), Red Ironbark (*E. sideroxylon*), Southern Mahogany (Bangalay) (*E. botryoides*), Bull Mallee (*E. behriana*).

Acacias

Thin Leaf Wattle (*A. aculeatissima*), Prickly Moses (*A. verticillata*), Silver Wattle (*A. dealbata*), Hedge Wattle (*A. paradoxa*), Blackwood (*A. melanoxylon*), Golden Wattle (*A. pycnantha*), Narrow Leaf Wattle (*A. mucronata*), Rough Wattle (*A. aspera*).

G. Hocking.

EXCURSION TO CLUNES SWAMPS AND FELL'S GULLY

9th NOVEMBER, 1980

A fine cool day with a fresh southerly breeze, with thoughts of a cool paddle in the swamps. First stop was at Middle Swamp where we saw, in the open fields dotted with trees, galahs, songlarks, brown falcons, plovers, black-shouldered kite. At the swamp itself were gulls nesting in tree stumps, straw-necked ibis, thirty to forty mountain duck grazing in the grass, white faced and white-necked heron, yellow-bellied spoonbill, and black swan.

On reaching Merin Merin the intrepid ones changed into shorts and sandshoes for wading well out into the swamp, others into gumboots to explore the edges. In a single red gum near the swamp we saw no less than 5 species of bird - red-wattle bird, red-rumped parrot, long-billed corrella, black duck and nest, and white-plumed honeyeater. And there was a fox's hole at the base of the tree.

On and around the swamp, apart from the birds already listed, were dusky wood-swallow with nest 4 feet from the ground in the bark of a large red-gum, restless fly-catcher, grey shrike-thrush, willie wagtail, welcome swallow, whistling kite, pink-eared duck, swamp harrier, eastern rosella, Japanese snipe, black-faced cuckoo shrike. An unusual sighting was a lone black-tailed native hen. There was limited nesting compared with last year when there were numerous cormorant, gull and duck nests, possibly due to the lower level of the water this year.

Perhaps the most memorable moments were to see a flock of spoonbills spiralling to great heights with wings outspread to catch the air currents in the bright sunlight with the clear blue sky as the background.

After lunch it was on towards Fell's Gully. A highlight was the cluster of flying duck orchids, most appreciated by the

photographers. Birds included golden and rufous whistler, grey fantail, white-winged chough on nest, red-capped robin, buff-tailed thornbill; brown-headed, fuscous, white-naped and yellow-tufted honeyeaters, white-winged triller, and rainbow bee-eater.

J. Netherway.

PLANT LIST - FELL'S GULLY 9.11.80

Flying Duck Orchid (*Caleana major*), Showy Parrot Pea (*Dillwynia sericea*), Grey Everlasting (Daisy) (*Helichrysum obcordatum*), Narrow leaf Bitter Pea (*Daviesia virgata*), Tall Bluebell (*Wahlenbergia stricta*), Milkmaid (*Burchardia umbellata*), Tall Sundew (*Drosera auriculata*), Pale Sundew (*Drosera peltata*), Riceflower (*Pimelea* sp), Sweet Bursaria (*Bursaria spinosa*), Hooded Caladenia (*Caladenia cacullata*), Slender Sun Orchid (*Thelmitra pauciflora*), Scented Sundew (*Drosera whittakeri*), Golden Everlasting (*Helichrysum bracteatum*), Scaly Buttons (*Leptorhynchus squamatus*),

Black Anther Flax-lily (*Dianella revoluta*), Drooping Cassinia (*Cassinia arcuata*), Ground Berry (*Acrotriche* sp), Eutaxia (*Eutaxia microphylla*), Matted Bush-pea (*Pultenaea pedunculata*), Cut leaf Daisy (*Brachycome multifida*), Grass Trigger Plant (*Stylidium graminifolium*), Peach Heath (*Lissanthe strigosa*), Gorse Bitter Pea (*Daviesia ulicifolia*), Purplish Beard Orchid (*Calochilus robertsonii*), Cotton Fireweed (*Senecio quadridentatus*), Golden Wattle (*Acacia pycnantha*), Hedge Wattle (*Acacia paradoxa*), Cherry Ballart (*Exocarpus cupressiformis*), Red Ironbark (*Eucalyptus sideroxylon*), Red Stringybark (*Eucalyptus macrorhyncha*), Candlebark (*Eucalyptus rubida*), Yellow Box (*Eucalyptus melliodora*).

G. Hocking.

SYLLABUS ITEMS

The committee welcomes suggestions for next year's syllabus of meetings and excursions.

It would be appreciated if these were handed in by the next committee meeting on January 27th.

BIRD OBSERVERS' VISIT

Several members of FNCCB joined members of the Bird Observers' Club for an enjoyable excursion to Mt. Beckworth and Fells Gully near Clunes on November 22. Melbourne BOC members were joined by others from Linton, Creswick, Clunes Maryborough and Castlemaine. The excursion was led by Wally Coles, assisted by Greg Binns as the large party divided up into groups.

About 100 species of birds were listed for the day. At "birdcall" time at Fells Gully, the list had reached 85 species and many more waterbirds, waders and birds of prey were added at Coghill's Creek and Flaxmill Swamp on the return journey. Bird-of-the-day was undoubtedly the Painted Honeyeater. Strikingly coloured pairs were active in mistletoe at both Mt. Beckworth and Fells Gully, summoning instant attention with their clear whistling notes. A small group also saw the White-fronted Warbler, found by Bob Dunstan at Mt. Beckworth - a rare sighting. Rainbow birds and the Little Cuckoo Shrike were also seen in this area. Nesting birds included the Superb Blue Wren, New Holland Honeyeater, Red-browed Finch, Diamond Firetail, Mistletoe Bird, and a Brown Goshawk which flew low overhead at Mt. Beckworth was thought to have come off a nearby nest.

M. Rotheram.

CASTLEMAINE CAMP-OUT MARCH 7-8-9, 1981

The 1981 autumn camp-out will be held on the Labour Day weekend. For the first time, it will be a joint camp-out with the Victorian Field Naturalist's Association.

Meetings will be held in the Uniting Church Hall, or Barker and Campbell St., Castlemaine.

Sat 7 March: 6.30 p.m. Business meeting of W.V.F.N.C.A.

8.00 p.m. Launching of Mr. C. Beauglehole's "The Distribution and Conservation of Vascular Plants of the Alpine Area, Victoria" by Mr. Frank Robbins.

8.15 p.m. Propagating Native Plants; Birds of North Central Area.

Sun 8 March 6.30 p.m. Business and Annual Meeting of V.F.N.C.A.

8.00 p.m. The Castlemaine District. (Programs by C.F.N.C. members)

Excursions will leave the car park in Downes St., next to the botanic gardens at 9.30 and 1.30 on Sat., Sun. and Monday; there will be a selection of half day excursions. Accommodation is likely to be limited so early booking is advised.

HUNTING FOR HUNTIANA

A search for the Elbow Orchid (*Spiculaea huntiana*) at Mt. Doran on November 15 failed to reveal any trace of this very rare species. It was recorded there in November 1978. When members returned in 1979 to prepare for a planned excursion, it was found that the area had been subjected to a severe fuel reduction burn in which even the ground was charred. There was no sign of the Elbow Orchid or indeed any other small terrestrial plants except for a golden carpet of *Pultenaea pedunculata* in an area which had escaped. The excursion was cancelled, but programmed again this year, when we returned with much interest to see the results of the fire on the vegetation and the orchid population.

First impression was of the extensive growth of bracken in one area and the bare earth, still with evidence of charcoal, on the hillside where the Elbow Orchids had been found. Nevertheless, this dry barren-looking soil supported a fair population of delicate-stemmed orchids, which were the dominant family. Most had finished flowering but some Duck Orchids (*Caleana major*) (also recorded in 1978) had awaited our arrival and appeared to be more prevalent and widespread than previously. Several *Caladenias* were seen, chiefly *C. carnea* and *C. irridens*, also the Mayfly Orchid (*Acianthus caudatus*). Two beautiful specimens of Leek Orchids, believed to be Short-lipped (*Prasophyllum brevilabre*) were found and photographed.

In the soft grasses down by a forest dam, fairly rocking with the chorus of frogs and bubbling with frogspawn, we found many flowering plants which prefer a damper habitat. These included patches of Bird Orchids (*Chiloglottis gunnii*), fairly widespread, Nodding Greenhoods (*Pterostylis nutans*) and the Spotted Sun-orchid (*Thelymitra ixioides*). The golden petals of the Tiger Orchid (*Diuris sulphurea*) made a bright splash of colour in less severely burnt areas with a fine stand in adjacent bush which had not been burnt. Beard Orchids (*Calochilus robertsonii*) were prevalent throughout in all habitats but specimens were smaller than those at Mt. Beckworth, perhaps due to the nature of the soil or season.

The gigantic flower spikes on a patch of *Xanthorrhoea* in the fire area were a highlight of the day. The inflorescences were remarkable for their height and shape, some straight, some twisted and even bulbous. Swarms of bees, butterflies and moths clustered on their columns of creamy honeyed flowers. The sun shining through the flowers gave them a white glowing incandescence and

cast radiating geometric patterns on the ground through the skirts of fine symmetrical leaves. Another grasstree area which was not burnt was also flowering but was not as spectacular or varied in form as these.

The bird population had also changed. Immediately after the fire, the birds were concentrated in a very small gully area where 24 species were recorded, including the Satin Flycatcher, White-winged Triller and Orange-winged Sitellas. The birds have now dispersed into the forest again, mainly in the upper treetops. Time and the heat of the day prevented a proper survey but a Rufous Whistler in fine voice serenaded us with a magnificent vocal display throughout afternoon tea.

It will be an interesting exercise to return to this area each Spring to record the changes and to see if the Elbow Orchid appears. This small leafless bizarrely shaped orchid with its insect-like labellum is thought to be possibly saprophytic and relies on the Thynad wasp for pollination. On the first occasion it was found, the plants were surrounded by rather angry jumping ants which left a painful impression on two members for some days. These ants were missing last year, but smaller ants had returned this year, evidenced by their many burrows. It would be interesting to know if the large ants, like the wasp, played a part in the plant's life cycle and what effects, short and long term, a forest fire might have had.

M. Rotheram.

The President and his committee extend to all members, families and friends Best Wishes for a Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year.
